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BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

Thomas Hardy's Critique of Christianity in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure

Hardyho kritika křesťanství v dílech Tess of the D'Urbervilles a Jude the Obscure

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Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma Thomas Hardy's Critique of Christianity in Tess of the D'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure vypracovala pod vedením vedoucí práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále prohlašuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

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podpis

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ANOTACE

Cílem této bakalářské práce je ukázat, jak spisovatel Thomas Hardy kritizuje křesťanství ve svých dvou románech Tess of the d'Urbervilles (v češtině Tess z d'Urbervillů) a Jude the Obscure (Neblahý Juda nebo také Nešťastný Jude). Teoretická část popisuje úlohu náboženství jako takového během viktoriánské doby. Dále informuje o situaci uvnitř křesťanství v dané době. Praktická část zkoumá hlavní témata kritiky na základě konkrétních výňatků z těchto románů.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Thomas Hardy, náboženství, křesťanství, kritika, Tess z d'Urbervillů, Neblahý Juda, Nešťastný Jude, viktoriánská doba

ANNOTATION

The purpose of this bachelor thesis is to show how the writer Thomas Hardy criticizes Christianity in his two major novels Tess of the d'Urbervilles and Jude the Obscure. The theoretical part describes the role of religion in general during the Victorian era. It also reports on the situation within Christianity at that time. The practical part investigates the major areas of critique of Christianity with references to specific excerpts from the two novels.

KEYWORDS

Thomas Hardy, religion, Christianity, critique, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure, Victorian era

CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy wrote his masterpieces *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* at the very end of the nineteenth century. It was a time of a heated debate over religion, especially in reaction to recent discoveries in science which started in the 1840s with works such as Sir Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*, followed by the famous *On the Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin. Simultaneously, there were also attempts at a revival from within Christianity (or more specifically, within the Church of England). In the atmosphere of that time period, people understood it was necessary to reflect on their religious systems and come up with a sensible solution for the beginning of a modern era.

Hardy's late novels are much more critical than his previous prosaic works. By the time of their publishing, he was already an established author. It is probably due to this fact that he felt finally free to publicly express his doubts regarding some of the morals prescribed by Christianity. Hardy was well acquainted with the crucial text of Christianity, the Bible, which is evident in his use of allusions. There is a general tendency of increasing the number of allusions towards his later works.

The aim of the thesis is to provide a broader view on Hardy's critique of Christianity in the two above mentioned novels, to identify specific areas and issues on which he focuses his critique and to document the way in which the arguments against the Church and Christianity are presented. Scrutinized will be the author's means of presenting his critical points as well as whether they are well-founded. In the end, there might surface some kind of "reformation manifest" as an inspiration for Hardy's intended reformation of the Anglican faith.

The theoretical part firstly gives a brief outline of the most prominent religious tendencies during the Victorian period. It also describes some of the particulars of Hardy's attitude towards Christianity which are relevant in the context of the subject matter. Secondly examined are the relationships between the Christian faith and various areas of human activity, such as politics, science, philanthropy, public morals and social issues.

In the practical part, the narratives of the novels are scrutinized in search for critical thoughts of the author. These are in the form of comments to the reader, within the direct speech of the characters or in allusions. The practical part is divided according to common themes of the Hardy's critique. This includes criticism of the society influenced by Christianity, of marriage and its indissolubility and of the inequality of genders. He also questions the necessity of Christianity in the new era, its treatment of sex and whether it is generally a useful tool for bettering people's lives.

2 THEORETICAL PART

2.1 Religious situation in the Victorian era

This chapter is aimed at exploring the function of religion in the lives of people in the age of the rule of Queen Victoria. It looks at the major tendencies within the religion of said period and examines their impact on the society.

2.1.1 The state of religion in the Victorian era

The Victorian era is associated with the start and end of the reign of one of the most eminent rulers in the history of Great Britain, Queen Victoria. Therefore it generally dates from 1837 to 1901. On the other hand, it should also be noted that as Seaman in *Victorian England Aspects of English & Imperial History* says "Victorianism neither began in 1837 nor ended in 1901. A man of sixty in 1867, no less than a man who reached that age as late as 1927, could certainly be described as a Victorian" (4). However, for the purpose of this thesis most of the attention will be given just to the time within Queen Victoria's reign.

It was a moment in history, in which religion played a significant role. Evans states that "the Victorian Age was beyond doubt a religious age". Similarly, Altholz asserts that "there was an awful lot of it (it being religion). The nineteenth century was marked by a revival of religious activity unmatched since the days of the Puritans".

However, it should be pointed out that evidence of religious devotion of the Victorians is inconclusive, as shown by the example of the Religious Census in 1851 on Sunday, 30th March. What was documented were the attendance rates of each place of worship during morning, afternoon and evening services. Additionally, the Census focused on average attendance, the number of seats, how many people came to the Sunday school which took place three times a day, sources of income of the parishes and other matters (Crockett 6). This census revealed that out of 18 million adults of England and Wales, just 7 million actually went to church on that Sunday (James 210). Other sources, namely Evans and Seaman, report that the number of people who did not attend church on that particular day was over 5 million (Seaman 17, Evans). On the other hand, religion definitely was a visible part of everyday life. Chained Bibles were

placed at railway stations, some printed sermons became bestsellers and there were also great efforts to spread the belief among the pagans, chiefly on those living in the British Empire. Moreover, as James points out, there were more than 1,200 places of worship registered just in the area of inner London belonging to thirty different denominations (James 210). The number of baptisms, confirmations and communions was also rising (Seaman 19). The events of the French Revolution, Napoleonic wars and the Age of Reason, with its scepticism and rationalism, actually paved the way to a renewal of Christian faith during the Victorian era (Evans, Sivandipour& Talif).

An important point to note is that the revival of faith in Britain at the beginning of the nineteenth century did not automatically cause a boost in confidence in Christianity. The well-established Church of England as well as other denominations faced numerous challenges and differences in opinions how to deal with them became sources of conflict. The branch of Christianity most interesting in context of this thesis is the Evangelical Movement (Evans).

2.1.2 Christianity in the Victorian era

The most prominent form of religion in Britain at that time was Christianity, with its numerous branches (Evans). Christianity is in Webster's New Universal Encyclopedia described as a "world religion derived from the teaching of Jesus in the first third of the 1st century, with a present-day membership of about 1 billion. Its main divisions are the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant Churches" (246). The traditional Church of England, established 1534, falls under the category of Christian Protestant Churches. During Queen Victoria's reign there were several attempts at a revival of faith. The most relevant branches of Victorian religion that will be discussed in this thesis are three streams within the Church of England: Evangelicalism or Low Church, Tractarianism or High church, liberal Broad Church. A separate faction was formed by Roman Catholicism. As Evangelicalism is explicitly mentioned in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, its characterization will be given a special attention.

2.1.2.1 Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism originated according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the 18th century and the term refers to:

> that school of Protestants which maintains that the essence of 'the Gospel' consists in the doctrine of salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ, and denies that either good works or the sacraments have any saving efficacy. Other features more or less characteristic of the theology of this school are: a strong insistence on the totally depraved state of human nature consequent on the Fall; the assertion of the sole authority of the Bible in matters of doctrine, and the denial of any power inherent in the Church to supplement or authoritatively interpret the teaching of Scripture. (qtd. in What Does It Mean To Be Evangelical?)

The word Evangelical comes from the Greek euangelion, which means "the good news" (nae.net). During the Victorian era, Evangelicalism was probably the most widespread influence, with causes such as abolition of slavery or redressing manners and morals (Landow: "Evangelic Protestantism"). It was also called the "religion of the household" (Hall 8), where it saw the foundation needed for a decent, religious and moral life, the area where sin could be repressed. The outside world was regarded as inimical, while the home was comforting and loving. Homes were the realms of women and family, joint prayers served as a symbol of togetherness and were mainly done by mothers. Interesting was the Evangelical stance on gender equality and education. While they categorically rejected the idea of equality of sexes, their stand on the education of women was positive, albeit just because the education was supposed to make women better wives and mothers (Hall 7-15). Contrary to the High Church, the Evangelicals did not emphasise the church hierarchy and rituals as critical for individual salvation. They favoured a personal conversion or "metanoia" rooted in the "comprehension of both one's own innate depravity and Christ's redeeming sacrifice" (Landow: "Evangelic Protestantism"). They were much more focused on inner religious life and reading the Bible.

Evangelicalism is in many ways close to 18th century Methodism. The main message of both groups was similar, namely that "whoever acknowledged Jesus as his personal saviour secured salvation at once" (Seaman 9). The important difference, why the Evangelical movement became popular among a wide range of people across all social classes, is that this revival came from within the Church, unlike Methodism. This, combined with the influence of the central figure of the movement, William Wilberforce, caused Evangelicalism to appeal to people from the middle class and later even from the upper class. What prevented Methodism from connecting with a broader base of followers was its initial allure to the lower class (Seaman 10). The essential contribution of Evangelicalism to the Victorians was, according to Steinbach, its "assumption that faith should pervade all aspects of life" (224). This notion explains the zeal Evangelicals had for social work, which will be illustrated in another part of this chapter.

2.1.2.2 High Church

What best characterises the High Church is their appreciation for tradition, sacraments and authority ("High Church"). They stressed the tradition and historical lineage of the Anglican faith. They insisted on the so called "apostolic succession" of bishops, i.e. a practice that a bishop can be consecrated only by another bishop so that the line of successive bishops can be traced back to the apostles. Followers of the High Church became more active in the 1830s. Their centre was Oxford, therefore it is also sometimes called the Oxford Movement. Another alternative name of this movement is Tractarianism, coming from the Tracts for the Times written by one of its most prominent figures, John Henry Newman. While the High Church revival continued, the main activity stopped after 1845, when most of the members of the Oxford Movement converted to Roman Catholicism (Evans).

2.1.2.3 Broad Church

Broad Church could be in some ways seen as middle ground between Evangelicals and Tractarians, as it "deemphasized the doctrinal and ecclesiastical issues" that caused a discord between them ("Broad Church"). One of its sources of thinking was the well-known Lake poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This movement was not as large as the others and had a "national and inclusive character" ("Broad

Church"). Thus it "encouraged Christians to act in, rather than reject, the world" (Moran). Some ideologies falling within this movement are Christian Socialism, focused on creating a natural Christian society, and Muscular Christianity, promoting healthy, active bodies as inherent in God's creation (Moran).

2.1.2.4 Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church, although being the largest single Christian denomination in the world, was not very prominent in the Victorian era. Catholics were seen as being enslaved by the Pope and using "mysterious practices" (meaning confession), intricate rituals and holding "incredible beliefs" (Moran). They were perceived as rivals to the Anglican faith, especially because of their missionaries in the colonies. Another example of this rivalry is the fact that the number of Catholics was growing not just thanks to the immigrants from Ireland during the 1840s and 1850s (Mitchell 159), but also owing to the converts from the Church of England (Evans). As will be discussed later, Roman Catholics did not enjoy full civil rights until 1829 (Landow: "Roman Catholicism").

2.1.3 Agnosticism

Although it does not fall under the Christian creed, agnosticism should also be briefly summed up, as it is important both in the context of Thomas Hardy's religious attitude and as a representative of an alternative trend in the religious landscape of in Victorian milieu.

The word itself comes from the 1860s and was first used or at least popularized by Thomas Henry Huxley (Everett + Landow). Being a scientist, agnosticism meant for him that "human knowledge is limited to the phenomenal realm" ("Agnosticism"). In other words, agnostics believed that "any manifestation of a transcendental or noumenal realm was beyond the limits of human knowledge" ("Agnosticism"). They were not explicitly denying the possible existence of God; they just said that humans are not able to prove he exists. Apart from Huxley, other well-known agnostics were Leslie Stephen and writer George Elliot.

2.1.4 Hardy and Christianity

Hardy's attitude towards Christianity and religion in general have been meticulously studied in numerous publications. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this thesis his personal relationship with Christianity is of lesser importance. What ought to be discussed instead is how, in his opinion, is Christianity connected to society. Where he sees its benefits and what he identifies as problematic areas. To the positives Hardy said: "I believe in going to church. It is a moral drill, and people must have something. If there is no church in a country village, there is nothing" (qtd. in Dalziel 79). The benefits of maintaining the public morals are also mentioned in his Apology: "what other purely English establishment that the Church … is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?" (Hardy: "Late Lyrics").

Surprisingly, although Hardy evidently assumes that Christianity (here represented by the Church of England) is needed to keep the nation's morality intact, there are some parts within the very same moral code which he deems unnecessary, to some extent even harmful. These – according to Hardy obsolete moral standards – are then utilised as a source of conflicts in his works and will be the foci of further sub-chapters.

Nevertheless, a question arises why, if there are so many problems with the current faith, does Hardy still see it as the best tool for inducing people to act in a desirable way? The answer probably lies in the fact that the Church, unlike other possible institutions concerned with morale, has already been established within the society. Hardy hoped for the Church to reform itself from within in order to "grasp the 'chance of being the religion of the future'" (Dalziel 77). The new reformed Church in his eyes should be simpler, free of "pious pretensions which have no counterpart in conduct" (qtd. in Hands 85) and "the doctrines of the supernatural" (Mallet 23). What ought to be preserved is the "consistent 'reverence and love' for the 'ethical ideal' of altruistic charity" (qtd. in Hands 85). After trying various other religious alternatives, Hardy simply declared himself "churchy; not in and intellectual sense, but in so far as instincts and emotions ruled" (qtd. in Jedrzejewski 53). This in practice meant he distanced himself from the Church. He admired it, but there were too many flaws he saw in its teaching (e.g. the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, Jedrzejewski 45) With a few

exceptions he visited church quite regularly his whole life, however mostly just to listen to the music and socialise and out of sentiment (Jedrzejewski 7-55).

2.2 The role of religion in everyday life of the Victorian society

As was already stated above, Christianity was the most powerful religious form during Queen Victoria's reign. Its influence gave the society values and rules for living a proper life. The emphasis on duty towards the country, the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice and moral decency shaped the thinking as well as manners. Not only did it frame the leisure time activities, it also determined what was read, discussed and conducted in many Victorian homes (Moran). The actions of believers were governed their faith in the moral directives which emphasized individual responsibility. Their lives were prospected towards more than just comforting immediate wants. However, the standards of conduct were adopted not only by people who were religious, but also by atheists. Lewis Seaman writes: "It mattered little whether a man did his duty because it was owed to God or because he believed it to be owed solely to his fellow-men in a universe from which God had been banished" (Seaman 6). Owing to the religious revival, the directives became deeply rooted in the minds of the royal subjects, regardless of personal beliefs. This situation did not change during the weakening of religious compliance in the second half of the era. "The religious revival … implanted the moral imperative so strongly within the nation's conscience that it was little affected by the relative decline in religious observance and belief of the second half of the reign" (Seaman 6).

2.2.1 Religion and Politics

As was mentioned in 2.1.1, there have been challenges to the dominance of the Church of England from other denominations of Christian faith. Perhaps the most visible was its struggle with Roman Catholicism, which was a cause of problems in the parliament and public sphere in general.

During the Victorian period religion, i.e. the Church, and politics were strongly interconnected. Not rarely were matters of religion actually debated in the parliament. For example, in 1867 a bill was introduced into the House of Lords which called for "better enforcing uniformity in clerical vestments and ornaments to be worn by

ministers of the united Church of England and Ireland in the performance of public worship" (Scotland). The Anglican faith's influence was immense, for example acceptance to various public school as well as universities, such as the University of Oxford, was based on one's allegiance to the Church. This rule regarding the admission to the universities was finally revoked (with the exception of the studies of theology) as late as in 1871 by the Universities Tests Act. "Persons taking lay academical degrees or holding lay academical or collegiate offices not to be required to subscribe any formulary of faith" ("The Universities Tests Act"). It is surprising that these restrictions were lifted so long after the parliament finally granted adherents of Roman Catholicism and also to Protestant dissenters the right to hold public office – a right which was, up until the Acts of Parliament in 1828 and 1829, reserved only for genuine members of the Church of England (Evans).

An interesting example of the impact Christianity had over the minds of politicians and politics generally, comes from the year 1831. At this point Britain was battling an outbreak of cholera. One of the M.P.s suggested a truly original way of solving this matter. He apparently saw the disease as some kind of God's punishment and therefore he "called for a general fast, as an act of national penitence" (Seaman 9). This idea seems absurd in view of today's knowledge; however, at that time the Church of England actually did appoint a day to fast in order to fend off the threat of cholera. The common population did not subscribe to this appeal: "labor organizations satirically declared a feast day for their readers, arguing that the poor had already fasted enough. Meanwhile, political Reformers observed, sometimes mockingly and sometimes in earnest, that if God was angry, it was probably because Reform was being stalled. Radical press and labor organizations emphasized the absurdity of the solutions proposed by the upper classes for an audience in very different circumstances" (Gilbert).

2.2.2 Religion and Science

The Victorians had to encounter attacks on religion with respect to current discoveries and findings. The veracity of the Bible was contested, for example by a German scholar David Strauss in *The Life of Jesus*, which was translated to English by George Elliot and published in 1846. Here Strauss pointed out, for example, the lack of

hard evidence of the existence of Jesus. Equally challenging were the findings of Sir Charles Lyell, who in his three-volume Principles of Geology stated that there was no evidence supporting the story of Noah's Flood. As a result, the people turned their minds to an idea which resembles today's concept of intelligent design: no matter what scientific discoveries claim, religion is the only way of understanding the natural world as a whole. Scientific findings were not dismissed; they were to be interpreted in a way to support the idea of complexness of God's creation (Evans).

The idea of God being behind complicated processes found its use also in quite a different area, namely, in solving the problem of the existence of suffering. A concept was introduced suggesting that suffering was a test of faith. The was also an alternative explanation that suffering is a a form of divine punishment for those who dare stray from the path of God. In the light of this concept, Evangelists strove to do good, such as helping those in need and educating pagans about the Gospel (Evans, Moran, Seaman 22-23).

2.2.3 Religion and Philanthropy

When examining the ways religion, particularly Christianity, influenced the Victorians, its impact on education, social life and welfare, should definitely be mentioned. "The Protestant version of Christianity was a powerful cultural adhesive", states Moran. The idea of charity and of being generous towards those less fortunate is deeply rooted within Christianity. According to Murdoch, the majority of charity organisations were closely connected to a particular denomination. Religious institutions were there to help people in the absence of state-provided welfare (Murdoch). The concept itself is supported by texts from the Bible. Broadly speaking, the great universal commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (King James Version, Mt. 19.19) could be seen as sufficient reason for doing charity. However, there are other verses in the Bible that are much clearer and more straight-forward, as for example: "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye

have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Mt 25.34-36,40). Thus Christians believe they are carrying out Christ's wishes when attending to those who are in need. Some concrete examples of what to do could be found in James: "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?" (Jm. 2.15-16). The passage continues with analogy between faith and charity, which the Bible-driven Victorians probably regarded as a rather strong pro-charity argument: "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jm. 2.17).

2.2.3.1 The Salvation Army

It was during the Victorian era that arguably one of the most renowned charity organizations, The Salvation Army, which exists and operates still to this date, came into existence. Nowadays the organization helps people battle addiction dependency, respond to emergencies, provides health services, family tracing, social work and even sports ministry. The Victorian version of The Salvation Army specialized in helping the poor and the clapped-out. "The Salvation Army began in 1865 when William Booth, a London minister, gave up the comfort of his pulpit and decided to take his message into the streets where it would reach the poor, the homeless, the hungry and the destitute" ("History"). Both he and his wife Catherine were actively seeking ways to help since it was their conviction that "evangelical work among the poor must be accompanied by well-organised social relief work" (Diniejko). Booth therefore worked not only as an evangelizer, i.e. someone who provides others with religious instructions, but also as a social worker among the poor and underprivileged. The organization started under the name Christian Revival Association. Very soon it was renamed the East London Christian Mission, because of its original main area of activity. The name we use nowadays, Salvation Army, comes from May 1878 ("History"). The Salvation Army and its social activities can be seen as a prime example how Christian faith influenced Victorian people and the way they approached problems of their time.

2.2.3.2 Religion and Alcohol

The rising consumption of alcohol and its possible side-effects was something the Victorians were fearful of. "The effects of drink on Victorian behaviour and on

social and economic trends was noted with concern by many social observers, and alcohol consumption rose to an all-time peak in 1875" (Geoffrey Best qtd. in Champ 94). At the same time, being under the influence of a drug was in opposition to the Christian call for self-control: "Representing the ideals of self-control and self-denial, the temperance movement epitomized middle-class Victorian values … shaped by both Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism" (Smith).

Christians therefore set out to teach people to control their drinking, focusing on the social effects of drinking on family life and on the dangers it posed when trying to improve oneself (Champ 94). The appeal to Christians to help those who have succumbed to alcohol could be found in Romans: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak" (Rm. 14.21), and as Smith puts it: "In that age with strong Evangelical influence, such Biblical references had strong appeal and were very persuasive. Those who were strongly religious were much more apt to agree with temperance if it could be supported Biblically" (Smith). Interestingly enough, the temperance movement had also had its influence on architecture, specifically on the instalment of water fountains, which were, besides supplying working-class with clean drinking water, supposed to also "provide an alternative to the vices of the public-house, acting as a 'moral agent' in promoting temperance" (Dobraszczyk 106).

2.2.3.3 Women and charity

Special attention should be given to the contribution of Victorian women in particular when it came to charitable deeds carried out for other women (or families) in need. While it was believed that their only purpose was to take care of their husbands, children and household, to be the so called angels in the house (Abrams), Victorian women found the time to also execute important charity work. Their work was usually concentrated on helping other women of families, while also evangelising. The role of women in charity work was viewed as following the examples of women from the Bible: "Phoebe of Cenchreae, 'a servant of the church', compassion incarnate; Dorcas of Joppa, who made clothes for the poor, synonymous with good works" (Prochaska 16).

Thus it comes as no surprise, that there were actual women's charitable societies that took it upon themselves to make clothes for the poor. The *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford* gives an interesting account of one of such societies: "Once a month the wives and daughters drank tea with each other; the evening being ostensibly devoted to making clothes for the poor" (White Ch. 3). While the women participating in this so-called "Dorcas meetings" were working, someone else read to them aloud. The *Autobiography* characterizes the choice of literature for such an occasion: "religious and sectarian gossip, religious novels designed to make religion attractive, and other slip-slop of this kind. I could not endure it, and was frequently unwell on Dorcas evenings" (White Ch. 3).

There were other means of women's charity work with regards to their social status. It was common for upper-class women to visit the homes of the poor, offering a wide range of services. "They brought food and fuel, provided medical assistance and household advice, and offered religious instructions" (Murdoch 51). Middle-class women met with those from the working class during mothers' meetings for Bible studies and delivered recommendations concerning parenting, taking care of a household or budget. Providing every single family with their own edition of the Bible was one of the goals of the London Female Bible and Domestic Mission, founded by Ellen Henrietta Ranyard. "The objects of these Missions are twofold, viz., to supply the very poorest of the population with copies of the Holy Scriptures, and also to improve their temporal condition by teaching them to help themselves rather than look to others; the former to be attained by taking payment for the Bible in small weekly instalments, and the latter by assisting them to procure better food, clothing, and beds in the same way" (Ranyard 297). Ranyard was also the first one to pay these women for making their visits, thereby paving the way for the professional philanthropy of women (Murdoch 53).

2.2.3.4 Asylums for fallen women

One of the charitable missions of the faithful was to help those who were marginalised, as for instance "fallen women". For those women, there existed special asylums: "the role of asylum was to provide deviant women with a moral cure" (Romero Ruiz 143). One could of course easily object to the reasoning behind the

existence of such facilities by pointing out the obvious double standard regarding the gender issues, as they were for women only: “only women received a moral cure in the Lock Asylum… (they) were held to be responsible for the purity of the nation, therefore they had to be chaste” (Romero Ruiz 143).

From today's point of view, one could certainly object that these asylums through their very existence actually supported the double-standard morality. On the other hand, while the asylums might have continued carrying on spreading this and other obsolete assumptions when teaching “appropriate behaviour through religious instruction” (Romero Ruiz 143), at least some of their work was certainly what people nowadays would understand under proper charity work. The residents were in fact also provided with education needed for “a decent working-class profession, so that a process of inclusion in respectable society would be fulfilled” (Romero Ruiz 143).

2.2.4 Religion and public morals

The struggle to keep the nation virtuous and chaste was a typical cause taken on by the Victorian Christians. This included matters such as the introduction of the Sunday Observance Bill (Wigley) or Acts of the Parliament regarding “obscene” publications. The intermixing of public life and faith-based morals, absurd by today's standards, can be nicely demonstrated on the re-opening of the Crystal Palace in London, in 1854. The Crystal Palace, originally build for the Great Exhibition in 1851, was repurposed as “housing” for an exhibition of Greek and Roman statuary. A month before the ceremonial opening, a letter from Archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops was printed in The Times. They spoke out against the male statues private parts being on display for everyone, deeming it “destructive to that natural modesty which is one of the outworks of virtue” (qtd. in Piggott 52). Seaman sees this as a manifestation of “doctrine of omnipresent temptation”, against which the zealous faithful fought by constant (and therefore often ill-focussed) vigilance (Seaman 13). The bishops stipulated the “removal of the parts which in ‘the life’ ought to be concealed”, or at least adopting the “usual leaf” (qtd. in Piggott 52).

2.2.5 Christian activities related to the colonies

Finally, it should be mentioned that Victorian Evangelicals were active in British colonies as well. Their mission there was to educate the locals and to spread the faith. The Evangelicals should be credited with the fact that efforts to abolish slavery finally succeeded (although it should be mentioned that it was in fact a nation-wide effort). Hempton declares: “the abolition of slavery in British colonies was neither an economic necessity whose time had come nor a disinterested political gesture from an established political elite, but was, to a considerable extent, a victory for new religious and political forces unleashed both by evangelical enthusiasm and by the structural changes in British society” (165).

3 PRACTICAL PART

In the practical part of this thesis, the major focus will be shifted towards describing the way Hardy is, or is trying to, criticize what he saw as being wrong with Christianity in the Victorian period. This part is divided according to themes rather than according to the novels, because most of the themes are present in both of the covered works.

In the beginning, it should be noted that since the novels are literary works of fiction, the presumed link between the reality of the daily life in the Victorian era and the characters and situations described by the book might actually not exist. However, considering how the book was perceived after its first publication (Cox 190, 280, 320), it should be safe to acknowledge that there was at least some genuine connection between the Victorian reality and the way Thomas Hardy described it in his literary works.

3.1 Critique of society influenced by Christianity

This subchapter explores the numerous ways Hardy criticizes society which, in spite of being formally Christian, in many ways did not act accordingly to the basic Christian commandments. This will be demonstrated on excerpts from the novels where it is most evident.

3.1.1 Christian society fails Tess

Though evidently strongly influenced by Christianity, in particular by the Evangelical Movement as manifested for example by the verses from the Bible being painted in the streets, the society in *Tess* is not acting according to the Christian ideals prescribed by the Bible. The Bible, which again was very popular within the Evangelicals, in Luke clearly states: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Lk. 6.36-37), yet the complete opposite of that actually happens to Tess. In the theoretical part of this thesis, it was demonstrated that charity was very “fashionable” in that time. Tess is basically a charity case, still no one thinks of her in that way. Her parents had many children to feed and were clearly quite poor. This statement could be supported by the situation that befell

the family after the death of the family horse, Prince: "The haggling business, which had mainly depended on the horse, became disorganized forthwith. Distress, if not penury, loomed in the distance" (TD Ph 1, Ch. V)[1], or when Tess's mother Joan writes to the recently married Tess to ask for money to pay for the repairs of the roof of her childhood home:

> Joan stated that they were in dreadful difficulty; the autumn rains had gone through the thatch of the house, which required entire renewal; but this could not be done because the previous thatching had never been paid for. New rafters and a new ceiling upstairs also were required, which, with the previous bill, would amount to a sum of twenty pounds. As her husband was a man of means, and had doubtless returned by this time, could she not send them the money? (TD Ph 5, Ch XLI)

Without any doubt, Tess comes from a dysfunctional family. So, why does no one help her? Her father is a drunkard, her mother is of little help to her, and she herself is very young and poorly educated. She is as good a charity case as can be, yet no one helped her. She was exploited first and foremost by Alec and Angel, but also by the owner of Flintcomb-Ash farm, Groby:

> She was the only woman whose place was upon the machine so as to be shaken bodily by its spinning, and the decrease of the stack now separated her from Marian and Izz, and prevented their changing duties with her as they had done. The incessant quivering, in which every fibre of her frame participated, had thrown her into a stupefied reverie in which her arms worked on independently of her consciousness. She hardly knew where she was. (TD Ph 6, Ch XLVIII)

Most of the people Tess encounters are just idle bystanders who do not help her in any way. From the society of unhelpful people, special mentioning deserve Angel brothers who both are members of clergy and who judge her without knowing her, thinking their brother has made a mistake marrying her: "regretting his precipitancy in throwing himself away upon a dairymaid, or whatever she may be. It is a queer

[1] TD stands for *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy, Ph for Phase, Ch for Chapter. Numerals used to indicate the chapter are Roman, as they are also Roman in the original cited.

business, apparently" (TD Ph 5, Ch XLIV). They manifest no desire to meet her, to welcome her to the family or to at least to inquire how she is cooperating with her husband being away. They are the opposite of proper clergymen and Christians.

3.1.2 Social ostracism in *Jude*

Social ostracism is much stronger theme in *Jude* than is *Tess*. Whereas the society of *Tess* inactively stands by, the members of the public in *Jude* are actively seeking ways to torment the major characters for not subscribing to their views on morale. The following paragraphs will illustrate that.

At the heart of the problem the people have with Jude and his family stands the fact that he and Sue are not officially married. The concomitant issues of this state regard Jude's job, their son's well-being, finding lodging and eventually Jude and Sue's happiness. Hardy criticizes the hypocrisy of people who automatically treat with suspicion things they do not understand and everyone who does not precisely toe in line is frowned upon.

> The unnoticed lives that the pair had hitherto led began, from the day of the suspended wedding onwards, to be observed and discussed by other persons than Arabella. The society of Spring Street and the neighbourhood generally did not understand, and probably could not have been made to understand, Sue and Jude's private minds, emotions, positions, and fears. The curious facts of a child coming to them unexpectedly, who called Jude 'Father,' and Sue 'Mother,' and a hitch in a marriage ceremony intended for quietness to be performed at a registrar's office, together with rumours of the undefended cases in the law-courts, bore only one translation to plain minds. (JO Pt 5, Ch VI)2

Through Sue, Hardy then accuses the society that is pretending to care about moral that it acts immorally itself: "I can't *bear* that they, and everybody, should think people wicked because they may have chosen to live their own way! It is really these opinions that make the best intentioned people reckless, and actually become immoral!" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI).

[2] JO stands for *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy, Pt for Part, Ch for Chapter. Numerals used to indicate the chapter are Roman, as they are also Roman in the original cited.

Although it could be argued that children are just learning how to interact with each other when at school and that it is thus understandable that they sometimes unintentionally hurt one another through a harsh comment, Little Father Time's peers are most certainly not acting like bullies just accidently. The reason he is being made fun off is nothing simple, as for example his appearance. He is bullied solely because of his complicated parental situation: "Jude … would come home from school in the evening, and repeat inquiries and remarks that had been made to him by the other boys" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). The situation is causing him to feel powerless against these insults: "'I couldn't stay to eat my dinner in school, because they said—' He described how some boys had taunted him about his nominal mother" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). What seems strange here is that both Jude and Sue feel equally helpless and under pressure. "Sue, grieved, expressed her indignation to Jude aloft" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). Little Father Time's repeating the comments made by his peers would "cause Sue, and Jude when he heard them, a great deal of pain and sadness" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). They eventually come to the conclusion that the only way to save their son from being taunted is to convince everyone they got married: "the pair went off—to London it was believed—for several days … When they came back they let it be understood indirectly, and with total indifference and weariness of mien, that they were legally married at last. Sue, who had previously been called Mrs. Bridehead now openly adopted the name of Mrs. Fawley" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). Why could not they have gone to the teacher and resolve the situation? Were they afraid he would dismiss them because of their unique relationship or blame them for being the cause of their son's sorrow?

One of the ways, Jude and Sue encounter social ostracism and general unwillingness of people to help someone in need is when they are trying to find lodgings. In a scene alluding to the one in the Bible where pregnant Mary and Joseph are looking for a place to stay whilst in Bethlehem, Jude's family is trying to find accommodation at Christminster:

> The householder scrutinized Sue's figure a moment. 'We haven't any to let,' said she, shutting the door. Jude looked discomfited, and the boy distressed. 'Now, Jude,' said Sue, 'let me try. You don't know the way.' They found a second place hard by; but here the occupier, observing not only Sue, but the boy and the

small children, said civilly, ‘I am sorry to say we don't let where there are children’; and also closed the door. (JO Pt 6, Ch I)

While people acknowledge the family is desperate, they find this very fact suspicious and consider it as grounds for the family’s dismissal: “His voice rose in sudden anger. ‘Now who wants such a woman here? and perhaps a confinement! … Besides, didn't I say I wouldn't have children? … You must have known all was not straight with ‘em—coming like that’”(JO Pt 6, Ch I). Although they paid for a week’s stay, the family is asked to leave the next day without any compensation: “‘I am sorry to tell you, ma’am,’ she said,… ‘but I shall be glad if you can leave early in the morning’” (JO Pt 6, Ch I). It could easily be called preying on weak that do not know how to fight back: “Though she knew that she was entitled to the lodging for a week, Sue did not wish to create a disturbance between the wife and husband, and she said she would leave as requested” (JO Pt 6, Ch I). It is peculiar that besides the payment the other thing that interested the landlady about Sue was whether she was married: “Are you really a married woman?” (JO Pt 6, Ch I). Here Hardy shows the strange system of values the Victorians created, where observing whether someone lives according to the prescribed morals was superior to actually finding out if one is or is not a good person.

The author also shows there are no blurred lines between actively tormenting someone and making them suffer indirectly, because regardless of the cause, someone is being hurt: “Nobody molested them, it is true; but an oppressive atmosphere began to encircle their souls … And their temperaments were precisely of a kind to suffer from this atmosphere” (JO Pt 5, Ch VI).

The society intervenes even with their source of income and thus sentences them to have to constantly travel from place to place: “The headstone and epitaph orders fell off: and two or three months later, when autumn came, Jude perceived that he would have to return to journey-work again” (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). Their surroundings force them to give up trying to explain their situation and to simply live and mind their business. Sue feels it is just better to go away: “The life suits us, certainly; but if we could get away to a place where we are unknown, we should be lighter hearted, and have a better chance” (JO Pt 5, Ch VI). Even at times when Jude’s job is secured, Sue worries about him being let go if anyone should find out their secret: “You are in work now; but

remember, it may only be because our history and relations are not absolutely known… Possibly, if they knew our marriage had not been formalized they would turn you out of your job as they did at Aldbrickham!" (JO Pt 6, Ch III).

The level of unanimity the society expresses on the matter of cohabitation of Jude and Sue is fascinating. People who do not necessarily care about the nature of their relationship yield to the pressure from the society and in the end offer them no chance of explaining themselves: "I don't wish to go into the matter—as of course I didn't know what was going on—but I am afraid I must ask you and her to leave off, and let somebody else finish this! It is best, to avoid all unpleasantness" (JO Pt 5, Ch VI).

3.1.3 Critique of the lack of education on sex

As was mentioned in the theoretical part, the Victorian era was very prudish. Sex was not something to be discussed in public, but not even at home. Thus, when Tess accuses her mother of not educating her on this particular topic it could be easily interpreted as a critique of the lack of such discussions and their possible side effects.

> O mother, my mother … How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men folk? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance O' learning in that way, and you did not help me! (TD Ph 2, Ch XII)

The point Tess makes about ladies knowing how to protect themselves from novels is particularly interesting in the context of the Evangelical movement and one of its popular tracts The Dairyman's Daughter, which depicts a young girl rescued by Evangelicalism. Timothy Hands states that "Tess reads, perhaps intentionally … like a parody of a contemporary Evangelical tract such as Legh Richmond's perennially popular The Dairyman's Daughter (1809)" (Hands "One Church").

3.1.4 Critique of the attitudes the Victorians had towards children

Another point Hardy makes in the novels is how people simply have children regardless of whether they can actually provide them with everything needed to grow up as a happy human beings. "As Tess grew older, and began to see how matters stood, she

felt quite a Malthusian towards her mother for thoughtlessly giving her so many little sisters and brothers, when it was such a trouble to nurse and provide for them." The author also criticizes the pressure that is put on the children to improve the social status of their families. This could again be found in *Tess* when her mother tells her "how I've got to teave and slave, and your poor weak father with his heart clogged like a dripping-pan. I did hope for something to come out o' this!"

It is of course a problematic point since the variety of contraception products was not yet developed. It could be at least said that people should make children feel welcome in the society, not to think of them as burdens. After all, the then so commonly read Bible states on the topic of accepting children: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 19.14) and "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 18.3). Yet Jude and Sue's children are precisely what hinders them from finding a place to stay: "'Tis because of us children, too, isn't it, that you can't get a good lodging?' 'Well—people do object to children sometimes'" (JO Pt 6, Ch II).

A very clear example of the way some Victorian children might have felt is presented through the character of Little Father Time. For instance when he speaks with Sue and says: "I troubled 'em in Australia, and I trouble folk here. I wish I hadn't been born!" (JO Pt 6, Ch II). And of course an even stronger point is made after he hangs himself together with his little siblings because he is worried about the economic situation after finding out Sue is pregnant again: "Done because we are too menny" (JO Pt 6, Ch II).

3.1.5 Angel as a "negative side effect" of Christianity

The character of Angel Clare represents someone who is certainly influenced by Christianity, yet not enough to the point where he could identify himself as a Christian. Some of the moral codes that have been passed onto him by his family's religion have been implemented into his personal moral code and have later on caused him problems in life. He cannot accept his father's faith, yet he cannot fully abandon it either. Through his character, Hardy accusing Christianity of leaving these "by-products" with their indefinite mixtures of various religious influences, which can unfortunately cause

them and their vicinity a great deal of unnecessary pain. It can be people who were for some reason (though in the case of Angel, it is his own choice) unable to finish the "process" of fully converting to Christianity. These people then stand somewhere in between, they are too much influenced by it to be able to completely separate themselves from it. They adopt various rules from its teaching, without assessing their value for their own life. When a rule is not based on personal faith, why bother with it?

What immediately comes to mind as an example of such morale fusion is Angel's attitude towards sex. He persuaded himself once that it was not against his personal belief to have premarital sex, when "tossed about by doubts and difficulties in London, like a cork on the waves, he plunged into eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" (TD Ph 4, Ch XXXIV). Yet after that he decides to go back to what he has been originally taught. "'Happily I awoke almost immediately to a sense of my folly,' he continued. 'I would have no more to say to her, and I came home. I have never repeated the offence'" (TD Ph 4, Ch XXXIV. Angel takes once again the Christian approach and does not revisit the issue. He thinks of this past event as a mistake but carries on without feeling particularly guilty.

This problem is revisited when Tess confesses him what happened to her when she was at Trantridge. He even lets her explain everything to him. "Her narrative ended; even its re-assertions and secondary explanations were done" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXV). He is sympathetic to her cause: "You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXV). Nevertheless, he cannot ignore this issue in the very same way he ignored his own trespass. Suddenly, his misplaced shreds of Christian morale, his personal code and the Victorian double standard on the matter of female sexuality all take over his mind.

> It isn't a question of respectability, but one of principle! ... How can we live together while that man lives?—he being your husband in nature, and not I. If he were dead it might be different… Besides, that's not all the difficulty; it lies in another consideration—one bearing upon the future of other people than ourselves. Think of years to come, and children being born to us, and this past matter getting known. (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXVI)

Somehow Tess is in the law of nature married to Alec, but Angel is not married to his first lover and if Tess and Angel's children discovered the truth about Tess's sexual history, it would devastate them; however Angel's history would pose no problem in spite of the fact that Tess was raped, while Angel's sex was (most likely) consensual.

As a result of this, Tess and Angel do not start their life together and go their separate ways. Tess is miserable as evidenced for instance by the confession she makes about wanting "putting an end" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXVI) to herself or by the letter Tess write to Angel from Flintcomb-Ash: "I think I must die if you do not come soon, or tell me to come to you. The punishment you have measured out to me is deserved—I do know that—well deserved—and you are right and just to be angry with me. But, Angel, please, please, not to be just—only a little kind to me, even if I do not deserve it, and come to me!" (TD Ph 6, Ch XLVIII). How surprising is then the sudden turnabout of Angel's morale system when comes back for Tess saying: "I will not desert you! I will protect you by every means in my power, dearest love, whatever you may have done or not have done" (TD Ph 7, Ch LVII).Angel willingly caused Tess so much pain in the name of his "morale system" only to abandon it completely after he realises his foolishness. Had he not been acquainted with Christianity and the social standards shaped according to its teaching, this might not have happened.

3.2 Critique of marriage

One of the biggest problems Hardy sees within Christianity is the institution of marriage and the principles of its indissolubility. He suggests that if one is not happy in a marriage, there should be an easy way to enable the partners to go their separate ways. This chapter closely examines the description of three marriages and one alternative relationship of major characters in *Tess* and *Jude*.

Firstly, the traditional Christian approach toward marriage should be recalled. Marriage is one of the pillars of Christianity. There are several passages in the Bible referring to its main functions. For example, Ephesians fundamentally states marriage is a projection of Christ's love and sacrifice for the church. It also describes the different roles a husband and a wife have in a marriage. "Even as Christ is the head of the church:

and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5.23-25). One of the more "practical" reasons to get married may also be "to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Co. 7.2)

Hardy's critique of marriage is manifold. It connects criticism of the Christian's ideal of marriage (mainly the principle of indissolubility is in some cases deemed unreasonable) with criticism of the bureaucracy of state and Church associated with it.

3.2.1 The accessibility of divorce in the Victorian era

Until The Matrimonial Causes Act passed in 1857, it was not possible to obtain a divorce any other way than either to be legally separated, which was granted by the church and was called "divorce a mensa et thoro", meaning that "the parties remain husband and wife but without cohabitation" ("a mensa"), or to get a divorce by Act of Parliament. However, this second alternative was possible for the rich only ("A brief history"). The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 introduced the possibility of divorce to the general population. At the same time, it was not easy to actually get divorced, since the only official reason acceptable for wanting a divorce was adultery which had to be proved. If a woman was asking for the divorce, she additionally had to prove that her husband "had either treated her with cruelty, had deserted her, or had committed incest or bigamy" ("Matrimonial Causes"). Another problem was that only the High Court in London could dissolve a marriage and the "proceedings were held in open court, enabling society to be scandalised by the personal details revealed during the process" ("A brief history").

3.2.2 Critique of marriage in *Tess*

In *Tess* the critique of marriage is less central than in *Jude*, yet it could be found in the passages dealing with Tess and Angel's marriage. Angel banishing Tess certainly goes against the traditional vows "to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse" which come from the Book of Common Prayer (Everitt). At the same time, he was unable to petition for divorce because Tess's confession to Angel would not be seen as sufficient grounds for it (since it was not a case of adultery). "How can I divorce

you?" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXVI), Angel says to Tess who did not understand how Victorian law worked. She thought her confession would be sufficient. "O Tess—you are too, too—childish—unformed—crude, I suppose! ... You don't understand the law—you don't understand!" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXVI). Hardy criticizes that for a long period of time the lawmakers did not think there could be any other reason except for adultery to dissolve a marriage. The simple fact that someone is very unhappy in his or her marriage was not considered relevant.

3.2.3 The critique of marriage and the problem of divorce in *Jude*

In *Jude*, Hardy made marriage, divorce and different attitudes towards them the central theme. Through various relationships different issues that are connected to these topics are demonstrated.

3.2.3.1 Submitting to tradition may lead to mutual unhappiness

The marriage of Jude and Arabella serves as an illustration how yielding to the customs can make the life depressing for both of the partners. It is based on the assumption that she is pregnant. Jude decides to abide the tradition and although he is quite certain she is not the right women for him, he marries her.

> He knew well, too well, in the secret centre of his brain, that Arabella was not worth a great deal as a specimen of womankind. Yet such being the custom of the rural districts among honourable young men who had drifted so far into intimacy with a woman as he unfortunately had done, he was ready to abide by what he had said, and take the consequences. (JO Pt 1, Ch IX)

Both of the times they were together the marriage made unhappy not only Jude but Arabella as well. "That she had gone tired of him she frankly admitted" (JO Pt 1, Ch XI).

An analogy could be seen between Jude's following the tradition by marrying Arabella because she was pregnant, and between being a Christian simply based on the fact it was a sort of tradition in those times. Jude later on discovers that similarly as marriage was not the right choice for him and Arabella, Christianity many not be the

right choice for everyone either. Maybe the source of depression could for some people have been their blind following of Christian faith.

3.2.3.2 The pointlessness of formal divorce

The unnecessary proceedings required for a marriage to be ended are presented through the way other characters speak about Jude and Arabella's marriage. Hardy introduces his view on this matter when Sue speaks with Jude: "I thought, of course, that she had never been really your wife since she left you of her own accord years and years ago! My sense of it was, that a parting such as yours from her, and mine from him, ended the marriage" (JO Pt 4, Ch V). Sue promotes the perception based on common sense that it should not be necessary to prolong the distress of the parties once they (or one of the partners) decides to leave. A similar point is made when Phillotson speaks about Sue being his wife "in name and law" (JO Pt 4, Ch VI) only. The red tape of divorce is also described as being basically unnecessary for anyone who is not from the upper-class, since no one bothers to investigate the true reasons for a divorce and whether these reasons are well-founded. "There is this advantage in being poor obscure people like us—that these things are done for us in a rough and ready fashion. … If we'd been patented nobilities we should have had infinite trouble, and days and weeks would have been spent in investigations" (JO Pt 5, Ch I). Phillotson and Sue got divorced even though at that time Sue has not really committed adultery with Jude. Arabella's second marriage was also not discovered by the court. "I was afraid her criminal second marriage would have been discovered, and she punished; but nobody took any interest in her—nobody inquired, nobody suspected it" (JO Pt 5, Ch I). If there is no endeavour to actually scrutinize the matter, why should it be necessary to petition for a divorce at all? And how is it then possible that dissolution of a marriage takes six months?

This matter is closely related to the harsh critique of society's hypocrisy. "(Arabella is) Married another? … It is a crime—as the world treats it, but does not believe" (JO Pt 4, Ch V). Arabella left Jude because she was unsatisfied with him, "that she had gone tired of him she frankly admitted" (JO Pt 1, Ch XI), and married again in Australia. Officially, she was a bigamist until legally divorcing Jude. However, in praxis she was clearly not one.

3.2.3.3 The social status of a divorcee

Richard Phillotson sheds light on how Victorian society accepted divorcees. While he believes liberating Sue "can do her no possible harm, and will open up a chance of happiness for her which she has never dreamt of hitherto" (JO Pt 4, Ch VI), he is also certain his own chances of being divorced and still continue on teaching are slim. "I have hopelessly ruined my prospects because of my decision as to what was best for us, though she does not know it; I see only dire poverty ahead from my feet to the grave" (JO Pt 4, Ch VI). This suggests that doing what is good and proper, i.e. enabling someone else to find happiness, can also sentence the other person to a live in seclusion, preventing him or her from ever doing their job. If the society was not ready to accept divorcees, why was it then even possible to legally become one? This is yet another instance of Victorian social ostracism in a vigorously Christian era. Apart from social exclusion, there were other problems a divorcee had to face. For example, a divorcee may have been declined when asking a clergyman to officiate his or her next potential marriage. "I believe, that a clergyman may object personally to remarry you, and hand the job on to somebody else" (JO Pt 5, Ch I). In Hardy's eyes, this goes against the spirit of charity and openness towards fellowmen.

3.2.3.4 Critique of a traditional family

Although it is not much elaborated, an alternative view on how a proper family should look like can also be found in the novel. The traditional not only Victorian understanding of a family consisting of a husband, a wife and their children is challenged when Phillotson admits that single-parent families ought to be considered a social unit as well. "I don't see why the woman and the children should not be the unit without the man" (JO Pt 4, Ch IV).

3.2.3.5 Marriage is antiquated

Through Sue's words, Hardy informs the reader that marriage is not suited for the modern era but the world unfortunately fails to see it. "Perhaps as we couldn't conscientiously marry at first in the old-fashioned way, we ought to have parted. Perhaps the world is not illuminated enough for such experiments as ours! Who were we, to think we could act as pioneers!" (JO Pt 6, Ch III). The society is more driven by

not-that-permanent commitments made by two uninformed people rather than by a search for true love and/or happiness.

Sue not wanting to get married to Jude could be interpreted as a form of social protest. She knows that getting married would make their lives easier but she simply does not believe that it would be the right thing for them to do. She is devoted to Jude and their love, and in her own sense she considers herself married to him but she feels marriage traps people, which in turn makes them lose their love for each other. “Her husband and herself had each been unhappy in their first marriages, after which, terrified at the thought of a second irrevocable union, and lest the conditions of the contract should kill their love” (JO Pt 6, Ch I).

3.3 Critique of the fallen women concept and views on female sexuality

This chapter explores the situation of women in the Victorian era, in particular their social status and how they were generally perceived with regards to their sexuality.

3.3.1 The role of women in the Victorian era

At this point it would be suitable to shortly characterize the general structure of the society with regards to gender roles. Victorian Britain was a typical case of patriarchy. As for the role women had in the Victorian milieu, their purpose was to take care of their husbands, children and household. Basically, to be the so called angels in the house. Their role as mothers was sentimentalized and idealized both in prose and poetry (Evans: “Gender”). Becoming a mother was seen as a confirmation that a woman “had entered the world of womanly virtue and female fulfilment” (Abrams). The “leisure activities” of Christian Victorian women included charities (as presented in the theoretical part, section 2.3.3) and helping around the parishes.

To exemplify the inferior status of women, one can recall the scene from *Jude* when Sue asks Jude to give her away. Sue is wondering about the unevenness with which man and woman are treated in the rituals of the marriage service. “According to the ceremony as there printed, my bridegroom chooses me of his own will and pleasure; but I don't choose him. Somebody *gives* me to him, like a she-ass or she-goat, or any

other domestic animal. Bless your exalted views of woman, O churchman!" (JO Pt 3, Ch VII).

3.3.2 Tess as a "fallen woman"

In *Tess*, the author denounces the double standard involving gender and sex. Whereas it is just a mere mistake for a man when he engages in premarital sex, a woman doing the same is labelled as "fallen".

This can be illustrated on the attitude of Angel towards Tess. On the one hand, he concedes: "You were more sinned against than sinning, that I admit" (TD Ph 5, Ch XXXV). On the other hand, but he does not acknowledge it was not her fault. He still at least partly blames her, a rape victim. One can only imagine how many of those young "fallen" women who ended up in the asylums during the Victorian era (discussed in part 2.2.3.4) might have been rape victims and as a result of that had no other option than to make their living by prostitution.

3.3.3 Women sexuality in the context of Sue and Arabella

During the Victorian period it was generally thought women belonged to one of the following extremes. First, there were women generally disinterested in sex which would apply to Sue: "I am not a cold-natured, sexless creature, am I, for keeping you at such a distance?" (JO Pt 5, Ch II). The second option comprises women who were "were fully 'fallen' and corrupted by their sexuality" (Murdoch 135). This schematic view is echoed in the character of Arabella. "The unvoiced call of woman to man, which was uttered very distinctly by Arabella's personality, held Jude to the spot against his intention—almost against his will, and in a way new to his experience" (JO Pt 1, Ch VI).

Hardy does not necessarily contradict this generalisation. Instead he puts those extremes in context and demonstrates that none of those is necessarily better than the other one. Both of them have good qualities as well as flaws, which ultimately results in Jude's resignation over his own faith. The personal turmoil of Hardy's female characters dismantles the image of the perfect wife living just to serve her husband and family as it was promoted by the Evangelicals. The heroines are the moving forces in the story, using their sexuality and power over the male characters. Evidence for this

can be found in the way Arabella seduces Jude or in the ending of Sue and Jude's relationship. Sue simply says "I have thought of it a good deal since my babies died. I don't think I ought to be your wife—or as your wife—any longer" (JO Pt 6, Ch III).

3.4 Other critical points against Christianity

This chapter presents more critical remarks on Christianity which can be found in *Jude* and *Tess* and which do not necessarily fit into any of the three other areas investigated in chapters three, four and five. Whereas the topics discussed in the previous subchapters of the practical part were somehow connected to broader social issues, these final critical points are strictly oriented at Christianity.

3.4.1 What is the role of Christianity in modern era?

It could be said that with his novels, Hardy questions the importance of Christianity and religion as such. The major characters generally do not have much good experience with it as would be further illustrated on the examples of Angel, Tess, Sue and Jude.

When looking at the religious attitudes of Angel one can clearly see autobiographic tendencies, since what he says to his father is very similar to the way Hardy assessed the Church (as discussed in the theoretical part, section 2.1.4). Angel who was expected to become a vicar, same as his father and brothers, declares his view on this matter in a very pregnant way:

> I should like to say, once for all, that I should prefer not to take Orders. I fear I could not conscientiously do so. I love the Church as one loves a parent. I shall always have the warmest affection for her. There is no institution for whose history I have a deeper admiration; but I cannot honestly be ordained her minister, as my brothers are, while she refuses to liberate her mind from an untenable redemptive theolatry. (TD Ph 3, Ch XVIII)

There is definitely a certain respect for the Church and for its rich history. However, Angel indicates that he has moved beyond that. He is convinced that the Church should adapt to the modern world in order to stay relevant for him. Moreover, as a result of Angel's confession it is decided by his father that Angel should not go to

Cambridge. “The University as a step to anything but ordination seemed, to this man of fixed ideas, a preface without a volume” (TD Ph 3, Ch XVIII). His father, a parson, implies a certain exclusivity of the Church by denying Angel the access to tertiary education. It may also be seen as an attempt to protect the teachings. If one has objections to it now, imagine what else could they discover during his or her studies at the university and how other people’s convictions might be shaken because of it.

Alec is originally a non-believer, then after meeting Mr Clare he becomes a preacher. Tess relativizes the motives of his conversion accusing him that he did it solely for the benefit on eternal life. “You, and those like you, take your fill of pleasure on earth by making the life of such as me bitter and black with sorrow; and then it is a fine thing, when you have had enough of that, to think of securing your pleasure in heaven by becoming converted” (TD Ph 6, Ch XLV). Hardy doubts that the conversion of people is not at least a little bit motivated by the vision of afterlife.

Through Tess’s story, Hardy also condemns the Christian doctrine of complete forgiveness people’s sins if they regret them. One cannot help but empathise with Tess who feels betrayed by this practise. “He who had wrought her undoing was now on the side of the Spirit, while she remained unregenerate” (TD Ph 6, Ch XLV). She was not a sinner but a victim, yet the Church did not accept her the way it accepted her rapist. Tess’s detachment from the Church is completed at the moment of the burial of her baby. The parson denies a proper Christian burial “for certain reasons” (TD Ph 2, Ch XIV) upon which Tess rightfully accuses him of being overly judgemental: “Don't for God's sake speak as saint to sinner, but as you yourself to me myself—poor me!” (TD Ph 2, Ch XIV).

Sue proceeds with her faith basically in the opposite way as Alec. She is originally religious, then she mostly abandons her creed while she is with Jude. After the wake-up call of her children’s deaths she proclaims: “I see marriage differently now. My babies have been taken from me to show me this” (JO Pt 6, Ch III). Suddenly she becomes a penitent. This story again illustrates Hardy’s doubts about people’s motives for being Christians. He suggests they abandon the faith very quickly when they realise they do not particularly enjoy the restrains it imposes upon them and rediscover their faith only when in trouble.

Jude's turning point in his beliefs is somewhere between Sue's and Angel's. His rejection of Christianity comes not just from the fact that it somewhat hinders him in pursuing his wants but it is also caused by his sudden revelation of the implications of Christianity for other people's lives. "You make me hate Christianity, or mysticism, or Sacerdotalism, or whatever it may be called, if it's that which has caused this deterioration in you" (JO Pt 6, Ch III).

It seems Hardy wants to demonstrate through his characters that while Christianity may be a nice ideal and a subject of his admiration, it is unfortunately non-transferable into everyday life of ordinary people.

3.4.2 Christianity's treatment of sex and its "regressivness"

The way Christianity perceived sex or more specifically premarital sex is another source of disagreement for Hardy. He associates its disapproving stance on the matter with the Church being overly regressive.

The author demonstrates his feelings through Jude. After realising he has feelings for Sue, Jude recognizes that he cannot pursue his original dream of becoming a prophet. "It was glaringly inconsistent for him to pursue the idea of becoming the soldier and servant of a religion in which sexual love was regarded as at its best a frailty, and at its worst damnation" (JO Pt 4, Ch III). He admits she is in the spotlight of all his thoughts which prevents him from serving as a "professor of the accepted school of morals" (JO Pt 4, Ch III). He sees himself as "unfit, obviously, by nature, as he had been by social position, to fill the part of a propounder of accredited dogma" (JO Pt 4, Ch III).

Jude acknowledges he could blame women for being the hindrance in his original plans for apostleship resulting from "academical proficiency" (JO Pt 4, Ch III). His dream of going to the university ended because of his marriage to Arabella and subsequently his ambition of working for the Church were falling apart due to his attraction to Sue. Nevertheless, he also questions the role of the Church and its teaching: "Is it … that the women are to blame; or is it the artificial system of things, under which the normal sex-impulses are turned into devilish domestic gins and springs to noose and hold back those who want to progress?" (JO Pt 4, Ch III). Jude decides not to actually

ponder this matter any further, but it is clear that the author at least partially thinks it is the latter.

3.4.3 Does Christianity improve the lives of people?

Here and there, Hardy makes remarks that suggest he is unsure of whether people would not be better off without Christianity altogether. For instance, when Jude voices his accusation "who knoweth what is good for man in this life?—and who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun" (JO Pt 6, Ch I), it feels as if Hardy was in fact asking "how does Christianity or the Church know what is good me?"

Furthermore, Hardy implies faith in God protecting one's life is blind. "Where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked" (TD Ph 1, Ch XI). Hardy believes that if there even is a God, Providence or some other higher being, it is a mere observer. The only thing the reader learns about this being in Hardy's portrayal is that although it is inactive at least it can be sympathetic. "A wet day was the expression of irremediable grief at her weakness in the mind of some vague ethical being whom she could not class definitely as the God of her childhood" (TD Ph 2, Ch XIII).

Why are then the people not protesting about being ordered what to do and what not to do by an institution whose faith is in someone or something that does not really care about them? Interestingly, the only semi-happy characters appearing in the two novels are in the end Angel and Arabella. Arabella does what she wants and whenever she wants according to her own rules throughout the story. Angel's character is happy only once he abandons all his moral burdens he created for himself. After Tess's execution he almost instantly marries Liza-Lu and leaves with her.

The other characters are either doomed by their association to the faith or to someone who is a believer. One cannot help but wonder with Hardy if "it might have resulted far better for mankind if Greece had been the source of the religion of modern civilization, and not Palestine" (TD Ph 4, Ch XXV).

Lastly, not being affiliated with Christianity had other purely practical advantages apart from setting one's own boundaries. This is illustrated by the

explanation of Little Father Time's not being christened: "Because, if I died in damnation, 'twould save the expense of a Christian funeral" (JO Pt 5, Ch IV). It seems very cruel to ask for money for such service from someone who is poor and has just lost their child.

4 CONCLUSION

Hardy exemplifies his critical points against Christianity through the situations his characters encounter. The rules are thus put into a wider context thanks to the narration describing the character's lives. The presentation of particular stories is suggestive and convincing. As a result the reader is compelled to admit there should be exceptions to the rules of Christian morality because their strict application may result in unhappiness. However, the critique in the novels is rather one-sided with quite a negative outcome, since Hardy mostly focuses on demonstrating the problems of Christianity without trying to find any positives. He provides examples of situations that are pushed to the extremes. It is at least questionable how many real living people went through something similar as the heroes and heroines of his narratives. It is understandable that Hardy as a writer presents the best story possible while also trying to turn the attention of readers towards where he sees a problem within the teachings. At the same time however, while one may admit some of the circumstances might have occurred, the sheer accumulation of them in one life seems overly calculated. In real life one can find counter-examples to usefulness of almost any rule. One can imagine that today a writer of Hardy's literary skills and persuasiveness might convincingly describe situation where obeying a speed limit in a city causes immense harm and injustice. Would one take it as a reason to abandon traffic regulations completely? In this context the Hardy's method of presenting his arguments by describing extreme situations appears to lose its strength.

It would be interesting to investigate the motives behind Hardy's writing these two novels. The solution to the problematic points of teachings as it appears to emerge from the two works is rather extreme. In fact, there seems to be a discrepancy between what one can read about Hardy's personal attitude towards Christianity and the impression one gets from the endings of *Tess* and *Jude*. As was quoted in the theoretical part, Hardy saw need for the Church of England in his era – it was supposed to serve as an institution for keeping morals. It is therefore surprising that the endings of the two works imply that the only way to achieve happiness to completely abandon all the Christian teachings including what they say regarding morale. While Hardy's original plan might have been to demonstrate every problematic aspect of Christian teaching and

to call for rectification of the rules, the ending seems to suggest the only possible way to achieve happiness is to abandon the teachings completely and to become quite an unscrupulous selfish person, devoid of any principles.

It might prove entertaining to further research whether there are any Christian moral rules which should be in Hardy's view preserved. Looking at the Ten Commandments, the only prescripts remaining unshaken by these novels denounce stealing, falsely accusing someone of something and killing. This begs the questions whether Church was truly the best medium for keeping these morals.

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